

# Tribal youth wins Courageous Heart Award

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Sixth-grade Tribal member Teegan Ritchey has a lot of heart. Officially.

At the end of October, Desert Paws, a Palm Springs, Calif.-based nonprofit that promotes compassion and respect for all living creatures, awarded Teegan its Courageous Heart Award.

Singer and board member Barry Manilow made the presentation.

"I was a little nervous because everyone was clapping and everything, but when I went up there, I was fine," Ritchey says. "I just walked up on stage and they gave me a trophy and a folder with a certificate: Courageous Heart Award for the Youth Advocates Group."

Ritchey rescued and adopted out more than 40 dogs in 2010, she says in a phone interview from her home in La Quinta, Calif.

She's been at it for almost two years.

It started with a simple-enough visit to the pet store.

"Me and my grandma and cousin went to the local PetSmart and saw the puppies and went over there," she says. A Lend-A-Paw employee, working out of the store, asked Teegan if she wanted to volunteer. And did she ever.

"She's the one who goes out and rescues the dogs and keeps the dogs at her house, and brings them to

PetSmart," says Ritchey.

As part of the rescue team, Ritchey takes the dogs for walks and socializes them.

"We walk them around. We leash-train all the dogs and get them social. We let people pet them."

She works with dogs of all ages, from puppies to older dogs, she says.

Every weekend, Ritchey and a friend she met through the program go to PetSmart to help adopt out these abandoned pets.

"This week is a really big adoption fair," she says. "We have cards out in case they want (to adopt) them later. When people are interested, we let them walk the dogs around in the store. If they want one, they have to sign a paper (saying that they will take good care of the dogs); we check out their homes to see if they're OK; not cluttered and no holes in the fences so the dogs can escape."

Ritchey started sixth grade this year at the Colonel Mitchell Paige Middle School in La Quinta, where she plays baseball, volleyball and soccer.

The middle school has been a new experience for her.

"There's a lot of people there, crowded hallways and everything," she says. "My hobby is to, like, volunteer with the animals."

She also volunteers at the Indio, Calif.-based Epona Horse Rescue,



Photo courtesy of the Ritchey family

**Tribal member Teegan Ritchey talks about the dog she has on the leash during a pet adoption fair, put on by Loving All Animals, in Rancho Mirage, Calif., on Saturday Nov. 19. At the end of October, Desert Paws, a Palm Springs, Calif.-based nonprofit that promotes compassion and respect for all living creatures, awarded Ritchey its Courageous Heart Award.**

where the mission is to provide a healthy environment for neglected, abused and unwanted horses.

"We brush (the horses) and clean their stalls," Ritchey says. "We feed them; we wash them off; we

sometimes ride them. I go out in the fields with young horses and pick up everything, things that fall off the fences, rope that wraps up hay bales (to keep the horses safe). My grandma's cousin owns three horses, so sometimes I ride horses with her."

Teegan's sister, Tribal member Kelsey, 15, is also a horse rescue volunteer.

"She used to do the dog volunteer with me," Teegan says. "She did it for a little while, but then got busy with sports."

"We all love animals, but nobody in the family has her passion," says mom, Casey. "Everybody in the family has always had animals, mostly dogs, but she has that passion. She'll see a dog on the side of the road and she wants to rescue it."

"For her birthday in April, when she turned 11 and had a party, instead of asking for gifts from her friends, she asked for money and raised \$200, half to help an elephant in Kenya, through the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, in Nairobi, and half to help a polar bear through Polar Bears International."

"Her aspiration," says Casey, "is to go to college to study zoology."

Teegan's father is Tribal member Tony Ritchey.

The Ritcheys also have a chihuahua of their own. ■

## Fire displaces Tribal member Michael Bolton's family

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

An early morning fire in Willamina on Saturday, Oct. 12, has left Tribal member Michael Bolton and his family with little more than their lives and the drive to start over.

Tami Tigner, a paramedic/firefighter with the West Valley Fire District, said the fire was reported at 1:41 a.m. with smoke and flames coming out of a second story window of the house in the 700 block of C Street in Willamina.

"It was in one bedroom and spread to another room," Tigner said.

West Valley Fire District personnel knocked down the flames, Tigner said, in a relatively short amount of time. A Yamhill County fire investigation team is investigating the cause, which is still underdetermined.

Faith Bolton, Michael's wife, told *The Sheridan Sun* that she heard a smoke alarm sounding and thought it was the alarm clock. At the time of the fire, Faith, Michael and their 2-year-old granddaughter were in the house.

Two other occupants were not home.

The three escaped the fire unharmed, but it took awhile

for Michael to realize that his 19-year-old daughter was not home and safe.

"I thought she died," he told *The Sheridan Sun*.

The couple's 20-year-old daughter also was away when the fire occurred.

In addition, the family's cat and dog escaped unharmed, but the 2-year-old girl's goldfish died.

The Boltons were renting the house and did not have renter's insurance.

"We lost everything," Michael told *The Sheridan Sun*.

The fire also destroyed Faith's jewelry-making supplies and equipment and her computerized sewing machine.

However, jewelry from a recent show was still in the case and Faith was at Spirit Mountain Casino between Nov. 18-22 to sell her wares in an attempt to start over.

The American Red Cross provided the Bolton family with three nights lodging in a motel.

The Grand Ronde Tribe has agreed to be the contact for the Boltons. Call 800-422-0232 if you wish to help.

Michael Bolton has lived in Willamina for six years and launched two runs for Tribal Council. ■

## Casino holding fourth annual Toy Drive

By Angela Sears

Spirit Mountain Casino marketing coordinator

For the fourth consecutive year, Spirit Mountain Casino is staging its annual holiday Toy Drive to benefit Doernbecher Children's Hospital at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland.

New, unwrapped toys and games are being accepted at the casino's Coyote Club desk through Sunday, Dec. 18.

Casino guests who bring in one or more toys will receive \$10 in free slot play per visit and are encouraged to make multiple trips to receive a maximum of \$50 in slot play during the promotional period.

"Each year, we've surpassed the previous year's number of toys donated to OHSU Doernbecher Children's Hospital," said Rodney Ferguson, Spirit Mountain Casino chief executive officer. "Once again we hope to see our guests answer the call and donate generously, even in this tough economic climate, to brighten the Christmas season for children and teens having a much more difficult battle."

Last year, two TP Freight Lines semi-trailer trucks delivered 28 pallets loaded with 254 boxes of toys to the hospital's receiving dock. This year's delivery date will be Monday, Dec. 19.

A suggested list of toys and games to donate includes rattlers, soft musical toys and stacking rings and sorting toys for infants and toddlers; tea sets, baby dolls, small trucks, basketballs and footballs, crayons and board games for pre-school and school-age children; and art kits and supplies, journals, current DVDs, new books, gift cards and hair accessories for teenagers.

For more information about possible gifts, visit [www.spiritmountain.com](http://www.spiritmountain.com) or stop by the Coyote Club desk. ■

## Elder's bingo changes days

Starting in December, bingo at the Elders' Activity Center will be held on Saturday afternoons.

A potluck meal will start at 1 p.m. and bingo begins at 1:30 p.m.

Because of the holidays, December bingo will be held on the third, 17th and 31st.

In January, bingo will go back to the second and fourth Saturday of the month, Jan. 8 and 22.

For more information, contact Elder Activity Assistant Daniel Ham at 503-879-2233. ■